



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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Live-Fire Training

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KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. – Over a period of five days recently, all 107 Kirtland firefighters traveled to the New Mexico State Fire Academy in Socorro for annual live-fire training exercises. All emergency responding Fire Department personnel are required to have this hands-on, live-fire training for proficiency certification.

The Air Force requires the training, as does the Federal Aviation Administration, since base firefighters respond to incidents at the Albuquerque International Sunport.

Live-fire training is not allowed on Kirtland due to environmental concerns; however, the State of New Mexico affords Kirtland firefighters the opportunity to train at the State Fire Academy at no cost. The Fire Department purchases fuel for the training and Base Supply's Fuels Section transports it to Socorro.

Several different fire scenarios place firefighters under actual emergency situations that might be encountered at a real-world fire including physical, psychological and academic stress to ensure they can extinguish fires or rescue persons involved in aircraft accidents. Training all 107 Kirtland firefighters takes five 12-hour days.

Realistic fire scenarios are three-dimensional and strenuously challenge the crews. One exercise portrays a 2,500 square foot fuel fire representing an aircraft engulfed in fire. Crews go in, extinguish the



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fire, learn how to apply extinguishing foam and for safety reasons learn how to determine direction of the wind so it does not blow back over them.

Another challenge for the firefighters is extinguishing a running fuel fire, where fuel is uncontrolled and running at its own speed depending upon the slope of the terrain. In addition to extinguishment and safety, firefighters must contend with heavy black smoke and heat. A third fire depicts a fuel depot where aircraft fuel is transferred from tanks to motorized vehicles. This 5,000 square foot fire involves two fuel vehicles that have exploded and are burning at the fuel depot.

All of the fire scenarios teach firefighters how to attack fires, the correct procedures to apply aqueous film-forming foam, safety support of attack lines to the fire and how firefighters work together as a team effort. It is critical for firefighters to know how to function properly with personal protective clothing and self-contained breathing apparatus, which combined together is 65 pounds additional weight.

Upon completion of the live-fire training, firefighters are certified to respond to actual aircraft accidents, both military and civilian.

The Fire Department Training Section is headed by Steve O. Cutchens, who works closed with retired Senior Master Sgt. Chester Estes, formerly a master instructor at the Air Force Fire Protection Technical School and now lead instructor at the state academy.



Note to editors: For more information, contact Senior Airman Paul Gritton, (505) 846-7019/5991. DSN prefix is 246. U.S. Air Force photos by Kay Williamson.

The images can be found at <http://www.kirtland.af.mil/pa/images/fire4.jpg> and [images/fire5.jpg](http://www.kirtland.af.mil/pa/images/fire5.jpg)